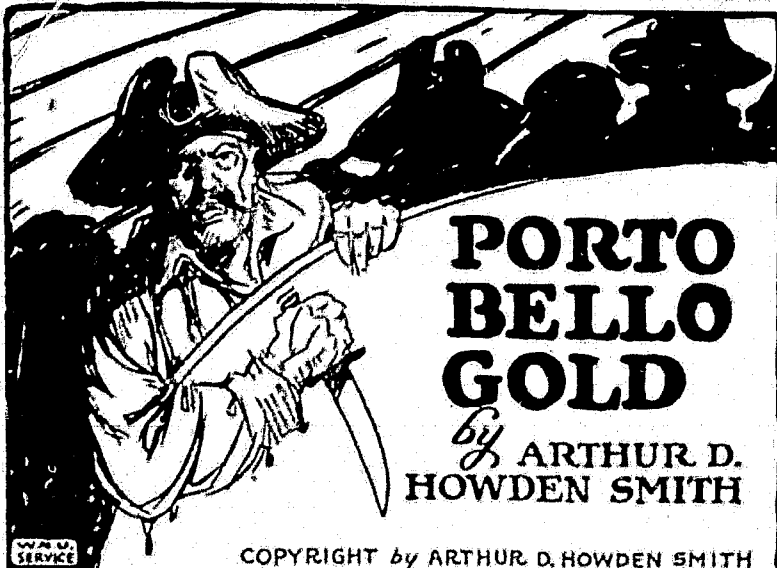




CHAPTER XVII

Flint's Way

ones swarmed into the cabin list were at breakfast, and his hery face crinkled in what he called for an amorous grimace as his fell upon Moin.

This is what I call proper home," he declared. "You come and sit Billy's knee, my pretty, and cut up here goat for me."

started to rise, but Darby was of no use.

Do ye no much as put a finger on me, and I'll send a bullet into the heart of ye," he challenged in his ill boy's voice.

Oh, ye will? Ye fed-headed—

Me head's the ship's luck," boasted he. "The less ye say on that score, better for ye."

We'll see to that!" snarled Bones. "Ye're the cabin boy, my lad, and no more."

le tugged at the cutlass-hilt, and by, in no wise daunted, hauled a pistol as long as his arm. But one could assault the other. Flint was in from the companionway and hit Bones by the shoulder.

What now, Billy?" he demanded. "n't we got enough to face w/out aghin' in the cabin?"

And would ye ha' me take imple and worse from this red-headed rat as Long John picked up in New York?" snarled Bones.

I'd not," returned Flint. "Darby, I may be my good luck and a lad o' mine, but I'll lay the cat to your udders if ye go for to make able."

"Twas him was after makin' the ouble," answered Darby sturdily. "n't he botherin' Mistress O'Donogh? Sure, I'm Irish, the same as he. I'll kill the rogue that does he in her cause for to weep a tear—t I will. And I care not who he y be!"

Easy, all," admonished Flint. "hat's this, Billy?"

Blow me for a deck-swab if I can as how she'd oughter be set apart," snarled Bones. "I'm mate, I am, I if I—"

Flint's bloodshot eyes focused upon a with something of the silent force I had seen Murray employ against wild crew.

"You know better nor that, Billy," he d quietly. "Here Long John's just in to tell me the crew ha' demanded foreale council, and fion knows what ardye and his gang will be up to. You want to bust into the middle Bute Four, that me. There's my thing I hold against Andrew array, but one thing he did as was a eliest any gentleman adventurer or done—and it's to his credit no is because Bart Roberts done it be him—and that was tute Four."

"A woman's a prize, same as treasure," grumbled Bones.

"Oh, no, she ain't! A woman's ouble—she's no prize. You know it happens when there is women oard a buccaneer. I'd throw the such overhead if it weren't that a's my best chance to find the stuff nray hid."

"If harm comes to her you'll get no knowledge from any of us," I in-

I'm after tellin' ye, Cap'n Flint. If him comes to her, or sorrow into the heart of her, 'twill be the end o' your luck—aye, lucky ye'll be do ye come off w' a neck ye can breathe through."

Flint went pale.

"Now, now, Darby," he threatened. "Don't ye talk that reckless way. 'Tain't good for our luck. And I ha' been main kind to ye, and—"

"Tis you would be the ruin of our luck," said Darby. "All I'm for tellin' ye is to be gentle in handlin' an elegant young mald as ye ought to be on your two knees before this moment for the trouble and sore dismay ye ha' wrought w' her."

"She's safe enough, Darby," Flint answered. "I'd never harm her. We'll keep her until we ha' lifted what's buried on the Dead Man's Chest, and then she and her two buccos can take a small boat and fare how they please, and—"

"And I'll be with 'em," added Darby. "Oh, no, not you, Darby! Think o' all the red gold ye'll have aboard the Walrus. And there's your luck we'll still need."

"Me luck!" fumed Darby. "May be—curse me luck! 'Tis more of a nuisance than a help."

Flint was high frantic.

"Lad, would ye lose all your red head has brought us? And look ye, too, if the mald's to be safe, 'tis I alone can keep her so, for w/out me there'll be — to pay, and none to stall the reckoning."

"And that before this glass is out," affirmed Bones with saturnine emphasis.

The mate knocked the neck off a flask of rum with his cutlass-hilt and poured the equivalent of a water-glass down his throat, gurgling it lustily that he might secure the full savor of the fiery liquor.

"I'll take the rest o' that!" exclaimed Flint eagerly. "Aaaaah! There's naught like good rum to put heart in a man. Billy, here, Darby, you finish it. That's the lad! And don't talk no more about losin' your luck. We're goin' to need that luck mighty bad these next few days. Aye, this very day, as Billy says. For here's Tom Allardye and a batch o' chicken-hearted — a-cryin' we should be satisfied w' what we got, disband and save our necks. And I don't know what more bilge-slush."

"Tain't Allardye I'm feared of," said Bones wisely. "But Silver. He's got a head on his shoulders, Long John has, and all the men'll listen to him after the way he carried the stockade."

Flint nodded.

"True for you; but what you're amiss on is that John feels same as I do about disbandin'. After the treasure's all lifted look out for squalls. But right now, Billy, Silver's as strong for pullin' together as you and me."

"Maybe," said Bones with more of doubt than conviction.

"Maybe? But me for a lubber if I'm not right."

Flint rose from the seat he had assumed.

"You come along on deck, and I'll show ye. You, too, Darby. No no, lad—when Darby would have hung back—I want ye by me. I tell ye that red head o' yours is the best beacon I ever steered by."

At the exit to the companionway he halted and spoke to us over his shoulder.

"You mind what I said about the girl. Keep her under cover."

"Must we all remain below decks?" I demanded with some heat.

"That's as ye may happen to feel," he replied carelessly. "So long as ye don't try to stick up to any o' my men and make trouble, ye can go and come around the ship; but let me find ye up to mischief, and treasure or no treasure, I'll keelhaul ye."

His green eyes twinkled evilly.

"Maybe Murray told ye what that might mean."

He gave Darby a push before him. "Run out and call the men aft," he commanded. "That's the boy! Billy, ye for a love-headed —"

plaster a grin on that mug o' yours and pipe us a song. We mustn't let them scowl forard figure us to be worried mads, eh?"

And his voice boomed hollow between the confined walls of the companionway:

"Oh, a fine, tall ship was the Elephant As ever sailed the seas. She came down Channel spout 'tween Bound for the East India."

"And Darby Lamb, he says to the crew— 'tis the best mate I have—"

"Tis the best mate I have," he gave, says I, I'm late!"

Bones joined valiantly in the sweep of the time.

They were out on deck now, and Flint stayed the song long enough to roar:

"Lay aft, ye swabs! Ye asked for a foreale council, and ye shall have it. — me, Billy, can't ye sing louder!"

There was no answer to this, only the clanking of bare feet on the deck

and the rustle of men crowded close together.

"Well, speak up, fo'castle," he went on with a note of satire. "What d'ye seek? I've heard tell as how there was talk of givin' me the Black Spot—whatever that may be—and sailin' home by your lones and dead reck-onin'. What's the argument, I say?"

The scene was almost identical with that which I had witnessed a few nights previously when I spied upon Flint's preparations to surprise Murray. Flint sat, as he had then, upon an upturned barrel, with Bones, Silver, Pew and two or three more. The remainder of the crew were squatted on the deck, a semicircular pattern of coppery faces and tattooed chests. The weather had turned warm after the storm, and practically all of them wore Darby's costume, a pair of trousers or breeches, usually slashed off above the knees.

Foremost in the ring of seamen was a tall, lanky fellow with rather long, yellow hair and a belligerent expression. 'Twas he who sustained the burden of the debate with Flint, supported to some extent by a group of a score or so, who sat behind him.

"Aye, aye, Tom Allardye," Flint was saying as we reached our aerle. "You was the man all against at-ackin' Murray."

"Wasn't I right?" retorted Allardye. "Didn't all happen as I said it would? Butchered, we was."

"Everything don't go right from the beginnin'," answered Flint. "But just look where we be now, mates."

"'Twas only blind luck as the storm wrecked Murray and we rode it out."

"Aye, and s'pose a frigate jumps us?" called one of the men sitting with Allardye.

"Depends on the frigate, man," answered Flint equably. "A Spanish frigate, a king's ship I'd run from. A Frenchy—I don't know."

"The ship's foul. We couldn't run," said Allardye. "No, mates, I say we ha' eight hundred thousand pounds, and we'd better be satisfied w' that. 'Tis a couple o' thousand pounds apiece."

"Aye, aye," came from a number of men. "Disband while the luck's w' us."

"Disband w' eight hundred thousand pounds more as good as in our pockets!" exclaimed Flint. "I never heard crazier talk."

"Better live w' eight hundred thousand pounds than lose a third o' us."

"How'd I Do That, Allardye?" inquired Flint softly.

There were expressions of opinion both ways upon this; the company was fairly well divided. And Allardye proceeded to press his advantage.

"If ye talk about losin' riches, cap'n, 'tis you are willing to risk losin' the eight hundred thousand pounds we have in hand. Ye'd go for the other treasure and most likely lose what we already have."

Flint squinted reflectively at the yellow-haired man.

"Now that might be a good army, ment, Allardye, if 'twas true," he remarked. "But it ain't. The truth is, I am all for makin' the treasure we have safe before we go cruisein' to the Dead Man's Chest. Treasure is a poison on a shipboard if ye ain't got a sure use for it. That's why I had ye leave ashore the lot Murray moved in the black-house. It's out of the ship."

Allardye lost his temper.

"Aye, ye want it where ye can get your hand on it, and give us the ship!"

"How'd I do that, Allardye?" inquired Flint softly.

"If I knowed how you were plannin' to do it I'd stop ye."

"Ah, stop me, would ye?"

"I would! There's other men ha' murdered or murdered the half o' a ship's company that there might be fewer to share in the prize."

"There's sense in that," agreed Flint. "Let's say as you and me bury it, Allardye."

The yellow-haired man shook his head.

"There'd be one of us come back—and 'twouldn't be me."

"Got a great idea o' me, ain't ye?" mocked Flint. "But s'posin' ye took along some friends? Would ye feel safe then?"

"How many?"

Flint turned to Silver, whose hard eyes had been studying the faces of both parties to the debate.

"How many would ye say, Long John?"

Silver's big face split in a smile of delicate quality.

"Seem as you're one o' the party, cap'n, maybe we might say five—six includin' himself."

"Ye think he'd be safe from me w' five friends along?" asked Flint earnestly.

"Six is a good number for buryin' treasure," replied Silver, grinning broader than ever. "And with you 'twould be seven—and seven's lucky."

Flint regarded him admiringly.

"Wouldn't ye know 'twould take Long John to think o' that? Seven is lucky, says he! Ah, yes, and who for? Well, Allardye, what d'ye say? Will ye feel safe w' six friends?"

Several men laughed.

"Yes," answered the yellow-haired man.

"Then that's settled," said Flint. "Pick 'em now. We'll start settin' the treasure ashore at once. You and your friends and me, we'll go off soon as that's finished. Bill Bones will take command of the Walrus."

"How long will ye be?" asked Bones, smiling in a knowing way.

Flint hailed Allardye, who was already deep in conversation with his group of supporters.

"How long d'ye figure it should take to stow away the two lots of treasure, Allardye? We'll put the gold and coined silver in one cache and the bar silver in another."

"How do I know?" snarled Allardye.

"How does he know?" says he. Flint echoed gravely. "Tell ye what, Billy, you just stand off and on, and when we're ready to come aboard we'll row out of the Anchorage. That's simple enough, ain't it? No chance for misunderstandin' or ought no' wrong."

Peter and I ducked into our state-room as the two came aft. They went into Bones' room, which was next to Moin's, and for some time we could hear them talking in low tones. When they came out Flint was saying:

"Allardye, an easy rein, but give 'em no slack. And leave the wench alone. 'Twould only make endless trouble w' the crew."

Bones replied with a blistering string of curses.

"And ye were a fool," he wound up. "To let Long John make odds o' six to one. His plum diff to Silver if ought happens to ye," remonstrated the mate.

"Don't ye worry, Billy. There'll be no man in this crew willing to lift a finger after I come aboard again. Wherever my kishish potatoes!"

When they were finally gone I looked an unspoken question at Peter. "In," he said.

"But six to one? Why?"

"He wants der treasure where only he can reach it. Ja, dat's it."

I roused Peter, and we threw on our clothes and ran out upon the main deck, which was crammed with pirates, starting in rapid suspense across the starboard bulwarks. The sun was just rising and the island shelled upward, darkly porticoes, from the creamy lather of the surf. The Walrus was standing south, with the white rock on her starboard quarter and the entrance to Captain Kidd's anchorage ahead, outside the entrance, and pulling up to meet us, was the gig we had left behind for the convenience of Flint and his companions. A single figure with a light-blue scarf wrapped around his head, rowed at the oars.

"But how be certain 'tis Flint?" I exclaimed. "His back is toward us, and at this distance—"

"Beegio! your garden Master Or-mard," said Silver at my elbow. "we ha' made him out w' glasses. Billy—he waved his free hand toward the party, where Bones strode up and down by the helmsman—'Is sore o' him?"

The one-legged man sniggered and lowered his voice.

"Ain't that supposed, are ye?" he asked.

"Safe to one?" was all I could think to say.

"Ja," agreed Peter, chuckling. Silver sniggered again.

"Aye, six to one. A strong, desperate feller is Flint. Now what d'ye reckon he'll do w' the map?"

"What map?"

"When ye bury treasure ye draws a map," Silver explained graciously. "If so be as one man knows where 'twas buried and he has the map that treasure is safe till doomsday—'less someone else gets the map."

"Well, he won't give me the map," I returned shortly.

"Noose, it ain't likely. But if he ever stows it where ye can lay your

hands on it or ye see him give it to anybody else you just remember as Long John stands your friend, gentlemen. Friend is the word, remember. And the old saw says a friend in need is a friend indeed."

Presently we rounded into the wind and came to, and Flint pulled under our lee, resting slowly, with long, leisurely strokes like a man who is weary but intent upon finishing a difficult undertaking. Now that he was so close we could see that the scarf around his head was crusted with blood. His coat and shirt were torn to shreds, and his shoes and stockings gummy with mud.

A man heaved him a couple of lines, and he knotted them carefully to bow and stern before he began to climb the cleats of the slide ladder, moving stiffly but with unerring precision. As his face lifted above the bulwarks the men nearest to him gasped and trod back upon the toes of those behind them. Such a face I had never seen.

'Twas not alone the terrible blue color and the congested veins that bulged roily under the skin, but a suggestion of experiences beyond the pale of ordinary human understanding. His eyes glared savagely. His mouth was fixed in a grimace of hatred. In his tanned cheeks were riven lines of fear, of anger, of revenge, of cupidity, of insensate ambition—aye, and of remorse.

He dropped to the deck and peered watchfully around him.

"Well, here I be," he croaked. "Ho, you Darby, fetch me a bottle o' rum. Yarely, lad!"

Lucky skipped away on his errand, white-checked and shaking.

Nobody spoke, and Flint laughed—oh, dreadfully!

"Ye ain't glad to welcome your skipper back, eh? How'd ye make out, Billy?"

Bones had shouldered a path through the clustering ranks, but even he was speechless before Flint's ghastly figure.

"We—we—we're all right," he stammered finally.



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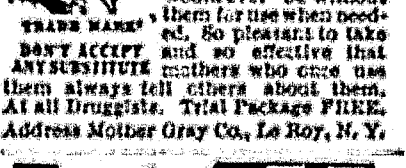
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WEST GREENWOOD
Gertrude Harrington and friend at
Business College, Lewiston, s
week end in town.
Dick Lawrence from Ramford s
few days in this vicinity recentl
T. B. Burk and Martin Lyden v
town, Saturday.
John Degan and family were
Ramford, recently.
Mr. and Mrs. Will Lowe were en
this vicinity one day last week
Mr. Hulbert was in town last w
Mrs. J. F. Harrington and child
have gone to Portland. Mr. Harrin
will go later.

Abbie Cross was in town one last week.

Nellie Harrington from Massachusetts was home over the 12th.

Mr. Lowe is working in the woods with Jim Cretean.

Paul Croteau spent the week end in Boston.

F. E. Russell, Supt. of Schools, is in town one day last week.

Mar Cross from Arlington, Mass. was at Saturday night with her mother at Howe Hill. Her sister, Annie, stayed with her for a two weeks' visit.

SOUTH BETHEL

Mike Vashaw was at home over the 12th and from where he has been

Dr. Twaddle of Bethel village is now making professional calls week.

Henry Tibbetts, who has been ill better at this writing.

The Rawleigh man was in this village Saturday.

Raymond Wartheimer was at the home of the parents, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Thorne, over the week end. He has employment at the apple factory at St. Paul.

Edna Porter of Albany was in to Sunday.

Mrs. Joseph Leonard and daughter Vera Hammond, were at Bethel.

Mrs. Edgar Chase visited her
Sister, Chase, and family Sunday.
Miss Mae Chase and friend from
Boston, Mass., called on Mrs. F.
Bachus, Sunday.
Emma Chase was at Webbville,
Mo., Sunday.
Mrs. Arvidh Cole injured her to-
day badly last week while working
and at Bethel.
Mrs. Year Dean and Mrs. Ralph
and were at Mechanics Falls over
week end.
Mrs. Henry Hall and Mrs. Chas.
Bright attended the moving party
at Jack's Mills, Thursday evening.

Anna Currier visited Mr. and Mrs. Hecuba and family over the week end. She has employment at the factory at South Paris and boards Mrs. Agnes Walker.

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the national records and interested to know if my primary nomination paper signed by my friends was sufficient to elect to permit me to send my friends papers even to all of my friends.

Again I wish to avail myself of the opportunity to thank my many friends and the interested voters of the N. H. for the interest they have shown in my candidacy.

In the primary election, friends, I am sure you will agree with me that I have made a great effort to make to all voters, and that be to interest my friends and voters and turn all a number of the opportunity we have, and should enjoy, of going to the polls on November 1st and casting vote for the candidate whom we deem principles are sound and who

and can best represent Maine to
H. Mearns.
It is true that the average of

